

Tornado Safety in Schools

Every School Should Have a Severe Weather Safety Plan

- Develop an action plan with frequent drills. Review the plan annually and anytime changes are made to the building, shelters, or classroom sizes. A good time to practice is during the annual statewide tornado drill held in April.
- Each school should be inspected and shelter areas designated by a registered engineer or architect. Basements offer the best protection. Schools without basements should use interior rooms on the lowest floor and away from windows. Hallways that have doors to the outside can act as wind tunnels, so avoid these areas. Put as many walls as possible between the students and the storm. Gymnasiums, cafeterias, and auditoriums offer no protection from tornado-strength winds.
- Weather safety plans should take into account the amount of time it takes for students to get to shelter areas.
- Make special provisions for disabled students and those in portable classrooms.
- Ensure students know the protection position. It doesn't matter if the students face a wall or put their backs to a wall, as long as they cover their head.
- Each school should have a NOAA Weather Radio with battery back-up and other methods to receive emergency weather information. Make sure the weather radio and other source of weather news is always available, **even during after-school activities**.
- If the school's alarm system relies on electricity, have an alternate method to notify teachers and students in case of power failure, such as an air horn or megaphone. Make sure everyone knows what the notification signal is.
- Delay lunches or assemblies in large rooms if severe weather is anticipated.
- During threatening weather, keep children at school beyond regular hours until the storms pass. Children are safer at school than in a bus or car.
- Hospitals, nursing homes, and other institutions should develop similar plans.



You can prepare for the dangers from severe weather by learning the safest places to seek shelter in the school. Learn basic weather terms and danger signs. The chances of staying safe during severe weather are greater if you have a plan for your school and practice the plan frequently.